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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQ CIA EU-IRAN ISRAEL EU-U.S.
IRAN-IRAQ GERMANY GERMANY;BERLIN

- A. Lead Stories Summary
- B. (Iraq) U.S. Policy
- C. (U.S.) Secret U.S. Prisons
- D. (EU-Iran) Nuclear Program
- E. (Israel) Early Elections
- F. (EU-U.S.) Transfer Of Passenger Data
- G. (Iran-Iraq) Relations
- H. (Germany) New Government

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I. (Germany) Future Foreign Policy

A. Lead Stories Summary

HEADLINES

Angela Merkel Is First Woman Chancellor (Frankfurter Allgemeine, Sueddeutsche Zeitung)

Angela Merkel Took Oath As First German Woman Chancellor (Die Welt)

Merkel Is The First Woman Chancellor (Frankfurter Rundschau)

Merkel Is Germany's First Woman Chancellor (Tagesspiegel)

Let's Go To Work! (Berliner Zeitung)

Editorials focused on Angela Merkel's election as Germany's first woman chancellor. ZDF-TV's early evening newscast heute and ARD-TV's early evening newscast Tagesschau opened with stories on Merkel's election.

B. (Iraq) U.S. Policy

1. "Dangerous Dynamics"

Stefan Kornelius opined in an editorial in center-left Sueddeutsche Zeitung of Munich (11/23):

"The argumentation pattern is well-known but is not, therefore, more bearable. The U.S. president and his vice president are always saying we are in a war and that is why the people must do their patriotic duty. Today, this means, the troops are at the front and those who criticize them or those who demand their withdrawal are jeopardizing the lives of people, and those who ask for the reason of the war or even insinuate that the reason for the war were played up are undermining morale. President Bush and his deputy Dick Cheney are now increasingly using this argument, since there are growing demands for a concrete U.S. withdrawal plan from Iraq and now an assembly of Iraqi politicians are also calling for a timetable for the withdrawal..

"Bush and Cheney are hardly able to fight the wave that is now gathering, since they have used up their credibility and are too weak to take action. But the Iraqis will have a promising future only if the U.S. forces do not hastily and uncontrollably withdraw. If Bush were a strong president, he would be able to explain this context. But because he is

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weak, coincidence and a strong speaker in the Senate could decide the fate of Iraq. Despite all the criticism of the U.S. policy towards Iraq, the country does not deserve this fate."

C. (U.S.) Secret U.S. Prisons

1. "Restrained Curiosity"

Business daily Handelsblatt of Duesseldorf (11/23) noted:

"The alarm bells are ringing in Brussels, since more and more details on the dubious practices of the CIA are coming to the fore almost daily and now the situation is escalating. All of a sudden the focus is no longer on secret prisons but also on secret transports. For the first time, not only countries of the 'new Europe' but also 'old' EU states are affected.. Three questions are now suggesting themselves: Does the CIA really maintain secret bases in Europe? Does the U.S. intelligence service use illegal methods and are suspects kidnapped and tortured without raising any accusations? And what do the affected governments know about it?

"It is necessary to answer these questions, since the affairs address possible serious violations of EU values and rules.. But thus far, curiosity is limited. In Poland and Romania, all reports are dismissed, and EU Commissioner Frattini refuses to launch further investigations. It is true that the EU asked the British EU presidency to clarify the charges, but no one in Brussels thinks that the British will accuse their friends in Washington of having violated human rights. The only body that remains is the Council of Europe. It does not have too much of a say, but it has at least installed an independent investigator from Switzerland. We are excited to see his results."

D. (EU-Iran) Nuclear Program

1. "The Iranian Stalemate"

Nicolas Richter commented in center-left Sueddeutsche Zeitung of Munich (11/23):

"From the view of the West, it has been a frustrating year. There were numerous setbacks in the attempt to solve the conflict over Iran's nuclear program. Two events were

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particularly remarkable: The Iranians provocatively started to convert uranium ore to get elements with which you can build nuclear weapons, and the Iranian President Ahmadinejad's call to wipe out Israel. A radical with nuclear ambitions is an evil thought, especially when the radical sets the agenda. The U.S. and the EU are no longer the masters of the situation. Their carrots-and-stick strategy does not impress the addressee. The carrot is the European offer to lure the Mullahs with civilian nuclear technology. But the vegetable is too bitter, since Iran should have renounced nuclear enrichment in return. And the sticks were not appropriate either. The U.S. desire to impose UN sanctions was not met because the Russia and China's vetoes. Their businesses with Iran are thriving.. A solution of the Iranian nuclear problem is not in sight. The West's desire to prevent the Mullahs from getting a nuclear bomb has become more unrealistic than ever before, also because a military strike is far too dangerous."

E. (Israel) Early Elections

Centrist Der Tagesspiegel of Berlin (11/23) editorialized:

"Revolution, earthquake, big bang - none of these words is too big to describe Sharon's recent move. The new party of the genius is now emerging as the strongest force. Sharon marginalized the die-hard conservatives around Netanyahu, and a more pragmatic and secular center emerges, which represents the Israeli majority. So far, peace-loving conservatives were in a dilemma. They were ready to give up land for peace, which was not based on hope and on military security. The options are now clear. The rest of the Likud

will become more radical and the Labor Party must move towards the left. Both trends will help Sharon."

F. (EU-U.S.) Transfer Of Passenger Data

1. "Strict Limits"

Jrg Reckmann noted in left-of-center Frankfurter Rundschau (11/23):

"For one year, the U.S. has been gathering data from European airports and passengers with a vacuum cleaner. According to the usual U.S. policy, civil rights take a backseat to the war on terror. The European Commission and

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EU ministers approved this.. Only the European Parliament stands opposed to it and the European Court of Justice might reward the MEPs' efforts. The agreement with the U.S. is invalid, a leading lawyer of the court said. It is ironical that this opinion is not based on civil rights or data protection.. Brussels should carefully read the warning, because the Commission used the same arguments for the planned collection of telephone data."

G. (Iran-Iraq) Relations

1. "Sweat Talk"

Karl Grobe noted in left-of-center Frankfurter Rundschau (11/23):

"No power in this world can prevent Iraq from improving relations with its neighbor Iran, Iraq's President Talabani said, which Iranian President Ahmadinejad probably liked hearing. The two countries are two peas in a pod and Talabani is an old friend of Ahmadinejad. There could hardly be more diplomatic sweet talk before a state visit, especially given that this is the first meeting in 39 years after a period of bitter hostility."

H. (Germany) New Government

1. Andreas Cichowicz commented on ARD-TV's (national channel one) late evening newscast Tagesthemen (11/22):

"Let's wish Angela Merkel luck. She already proved over the past few weeks that she has stamina and the ability to assert herself. I hope she does her job in a pragmatic, determined and realistic way, since this is what Germany now needs. For years, Angela Merkel has criticized the lack of reforms, but now she must tackle things and allow everyone to measure her against her deeds.. This alone is an enormous challenge for her, her government, and the grand coalition. But Angela Merkel must also succeed in taking the people along this policy.. Merkel will be able to accept that she did not get all the votes from the coalition parties today. It will not burden her, but an excellent result would not have fitted her either like the champagne after the signing of the coalition treaty.. She will begin her first term in a sober manner and this first term can end successfully. Others started with great pomp but failed miserably in the end."

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2. ZDF-TV's late evening newscast heute journal (11/22) aired the following editorial by Bettina Schausten:

"For the first time, a scientist is entering the Chancellery. Angela Merkel is a physicist, who analyzes

politics under laboratory conditions. Look first, then think about solutions and finally calculate the results. This may appear cool and heartless, and no one will love her for this. But it is at least pragmatic and sober. The test model with which Merkel is now faced is called 'grand coalition.' And in this respect, a cool logic is not the worst. To weigh possibilities, to put aside one's own convictions, this is the only chance for this forced alliance of parties to have a chance to survive. Merkel, who is now the boss in the laboratory, has now gotten this chance. She has deserved it and is now obliged to deliver."

3. Rainer Burchardt said in a commentary on national radio station Deutschlandfunk of Cologne (11/22):

"This government has the unique chance to restructure the country by continuing the reforms initiated by Gerhard Schröder. Then this coalition could really turn into a 'grand' coalition. But one thing should be also clear: Against this background this government will not be able to enjoy a 100-day grace period. The preparations for this coalition were too tense and the tasks are too obvious. It must begin immediately with its work. The opposition parties demonstrated that the relatively large parliamentary majority cannot be a cushion for her policy. In view of the power she has as a chancellor to determine the policy guidelines she must act the way she was dressed today: she wears the trousers."

4. "Woman Chancellor"

Berthold Kohler noted in a front-page editorial in center-right Frankfurter Allgemeine (11/23):

"Angela Merkel must primarily have an interest in emphasizing to the reform wing of the SPD that it now also has a responsibility for the state. That is why she must try to drag this wing over her side. If she succeeded in winning the Social Democrats for an alliance to renew Germany, then this coalition could really turn into a great coalition. It would have the necessary majorities in the Bundestag and Bundesrat to restructure the country. But the

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dependency on the SPD for future policy is also her greatest weakness. The coalition partner made her feel this dependency during the election and demonstrated that it is not thinking about an unconditional support."

5. "So Help Her God"

Heribert Prantl noted in an editorial in center-left Sueddeutsche Zeitung of Munich (11/23):

"Thirty years after the United Nations proclaimed the International Year of Women, it now also begins in Germany. With Angela Merkel's election as chancellor, the last great chapter in the book of equal opportunities begins.. Of course Angela Merkel's election was not a legal question but a question of power. But the implementation of this power and its future administration will give the phrase of 'equal opportunity' more power than a few paragraphs ever could. There are symbols that have a legal force. The fact that a woman was elected chancellor is such a symbol."

6. "Historic Turning Point"

Johann Michael Mller opined in a front-page editorial in right-of-center Die Welt of Berlin (11/23):

"A governing coalition formed against its own will is

now taking office to eliminate the problems misdevelopments and shortcomings that have accumulated over the decades. Every one knows that this is an almost insoluble task. But our country has no time to waste. It is in a state, which forces its political elites to show insight. Public households are at their end, the silver plates sold, the social security systems are about to collapse, and the non-wage costs are stifling. Nothing has changed about this since the elections. But one experience must be added: In a democratic society this knowledge is not enough. It also needs the will for change and the approval of the voters."

7. "On Probation"

Knut Pries judged in an editorial in left-of-center Frankfurter Rundschau (11/23):

"If the Merkel government is able to reverse the current political and psychological trends, the reservations of approximately 50 skeptics among the coalition parties will shrink to a negligible size. If not, this coalition

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will fail because of a long-standing disease and not because it is suffering from a fever. Even when looking at the exact count of her election: the chancellor will have to struggle. She is the new chancellor but only on probation."

8. "As Of Today"

Centrist Der Tagesspiegel of Berlin (11/23) carried a front-page editorial, saying:

"Pragmatism is not one of the state's goals but it cannot be detrimental to show this pragmatism. It must be accompanied by a patient explanation of the things worth working for, as the government cannot do this job alone. That is why this coalition must enter into a coalition with the people. The right-wing and the left-wing, the SPD and the CDU/CSU have reconciled, and now they must also reconcile with us, with the people. Angela Merkel like no one else is ready for this. She comes from the East, where there had been a revolution. The openness for new things by eastern Germans was considered a requirement, and they considered it their duty to start from scratch.."

9. Center-right Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung (11/22) had this to say:

"No one should be surprised if Angela Merkel will be able to bring about results in foreign policy in a short period of time. It is part of the secrets of Merkel's success that the physicist has never had great respect for people whom she faced in politics. Indeed, like in physics, on the international stage everything is relative. Large things often shrink in the course of time, and the clock ticks everywhere. George W. Bush, for instance, cannot be re-elected. Vladimir Putin's term expires in 2008, and Tony Blair is shattered, while Jacques Chirac is expecting the end of his career. That is why the influence of a freshly elected German chancellor is all the greater."

I. (Germany) Future Foreign Policy

1. "We Are No Longer Important"

Olaf Gersemann commented in business daily Financial Times Deutschland of Hamburg (11/23):

"On November 9, the day of the Reichskristallnacht and the fall of the Berlin wall, a hearing on Germany took place

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in the House of Representatives in Washington, D.C., a rare event these days. Three Germany experts and four representatives appeared. Four out of 438. That the other 434 representatives had something better to do shows the American ignorance, and maybe it also demonstrates a neo-isolationism, which has been emerging in Washington since the situation in Iraq is getting more difficult. However, the lack of interest also shows that Germany has suffered a loss of global significance. When Chancellor Merkel pays her first courtesy calls to Paris and Brussels today and London tomorrow, she should take this development into account and demonstrate a new German modesty.. We may expect Merkel to make a change. Her people have already described the recently aspired UN Security Council seat as an illusion. It was said that the Europeans in the EU should work closer together. The tight schedule of her visits shows that she does not want to be guided by her personal liking."

2. "Voyage Into The Past"

Moritz Schuller argued in centrist Der Tagesspiegel of Berlin (11/23):

"Jacques Chirac will never be so close to Germany again. New German chancellor Merkel will approach him at arms-length, as he kisses her hand. He always gave her predecessors a hug.. Angela Merkel missed her first chance to mark a new symbolic beginning. Her first courtesy call will take her to Paris, not London or Warsaw. With that she fosters an old but increasingly meaningless ritual.. Chirac is no longer able to receive anybody with his Gaullist hugs, with which he welcomed Schröder. The president has noticed that his country is in an identity crisis. He will no longer be able to use the EU as a tool against the U.S., and is completely unable to make new credible proposals for Europe's social policy. Strong symbols have become weak policy. If Merkel is really interested in a new political beginning in Europe, she should travel to Paris again in 2007, when Chirac's successor emerges."

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